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SUBJECT: LESOTHO: 2007 UNFPA COUNTRY PROGRAM DOCUMENT COMMENTS

REF: A) STATE 114072; B) MASERU 408

¶1. In response to REF A, Embassy Maseru submits the following comments regarding the 2007 UNFPA Draft Country Programme Document for Lesotho.

¶2. UNFPA's five-year proposal (2008-2012) properly focuses on appropriate objectives: preventing HIV/AIDS; improving reproductive health; promoting sustainable population growth and development; and fostering gender equality.

¶3. In paragraph 2, the document states that the current population of Lesotho is estimated at 2.2 million and that the results of the 2006 population and housing census are not yet available. On July 5, Minister of Finance and Development Planning Thahane released preliminary census data which has now been widely disseminated through Lesotho's mass media (REF B). According to this data, Lesotho's population is currently 1.88 million, reflecting virtual stagnation in the country's population growth since the 1996 census.

¶4. In paragraph 20, the document refers to analyzing the results of the 2006 population and housing census as well as supporting the intercensal demographic and health survey. We suggest including specific language about analyzing the effects of HIV/AIDS as a demographic phenomenon. While Lesotho's population has stagnated, fertility rates have not, various rationalizations (i.e., emigration, smaller family size) have obscured recognition of the significant impact of the world's third highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate. A UNFPA analysis of the demographic effects of the pandemic would be useful.

MURPHY